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News Release

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Jury finds Fridley company officials guilty of violating Clean Water Act

Two top officials of the Eco Finishing Co., of Fridley, were convicted today in federal court on multiple counts of violations of the Clean Water Act, the federal law aimed at protecting our nation's waters, following a nine-day trial.

After a day-and-a-half of deliberation, a jury convicted Keith David Rosenblum, 41, Minnetonka, of one count of felony conspiracy to defraud the United States; two counts of felony violations of the Clean Water Act; and 10 counts of negligent violations of the Act. Rosenblum was Eco Finishing's Chief Executive Officer and President.

The jury also convicted Martin Wayne Meister, 39, Brooklyn Park, of eight counts of negligent violations of the Clean Water Act. Meister has been the company's plant manager since October 2004.

Eco Finishing, located at 5100 Industrial Blvd., is a metal finishing business that coats metal products. It was fined \$225,000 in February 2007 for violating the Clean Water Act by discharging untreated or inadequately treated hazardous wastewater.

According to court documents, the company, which operates around the clock, typically discharges approximately 60,163 gallons of industrial wastewater per day. That wastewater enters the sewer system operated and overseen by Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES). Prior to discharge, the company is to treat the wastewater to meet metal and cyanide discharge parameters set forth in the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit issued to the company by MCES.

A superseding indictment was filed on Jan. 23, 2008, against both Rosenblum and Meister. That indictment charged the defendants with conspiracy and alleged several violations of Clean Water Act permit conditions related to, among other things, violations of limits on the company's discharge of metals and cyanide in its industrial wastewater.

According to an Environmental Protection Agency affidavit, MCES and the EPA began investigating the company in January 2005. MCES was contacted by an environmental manager at Eco Finishing about concerns he had with the company's wastewater treatment practices. The manager reported that Clean Water Act violations documented during internal wastewater monitoring were not reported to MCES and that the facility's cyanide destruction system was not properly working. According to internal summaries, the company was discharging levels of metals and cyanide that were well above the permitted limits.

The investigation also revealed that the company on several occasions altered its production and wastewater treatment practices when regulators were conducting on-site compliance testing. The alterations were designed to deceive the government by limiting the company's discharge of pollutants when the company was being monitored. When regulators ended compliance testing, the company would resume normal operations, resulting in violations.

U.S. District Court Judge John Tunheim will sentence Rosenblum and Meister at a future date.

The convictions of Rosenblum and Meister follow the successful prosecution of the company's former lab chemist, Ted Matthew Gibbons, of White Bear Lake. In May 2006, Gibbons was sentenced to 18 months in prison for violating the Act, including tampering with MCES' environmental testing equipment. Gibbons testified about company practices during the trial of Rosenblum and Meister.

This case also follows earlier prosecutions against a number of other metal platers, including Prime Plating and Hard Chrome.

This case is the result of an investigation by the EPA-Criminal Investigation Division, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and MCES. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney David M. Genrich.